Understanding Sex Offenders: An Introductory Curriculum

Section 3: Common Characteristics of Sex Offenders

Who is the Typical Sex Offender?

- **There is no sex offender profile.**
- **Sex offenders are a heterogeneous group.**
- **They may be more similar to the general population than different.**

Sex Offenders Come From All Walks of Life

- **Age**
- **Socioeconomic status**
- **Intellectual functioning**
- **Mental health**
- **Gender**

Commonly Identified Characteristics

- **Deviant sexual arousal, interest, or preferences**
- **Cognitive distortions**
- **Social, interpersonal, and intimacy deficits**
- **Victim empathy deficits**
- **Poor self-management skills**
- **Under-detected deviant sexual behaviors**
- **History of maltreatment**

Key Examples of Static Risk Factors

- **Age of onset**
- **Prior sex offenses**
- **Male victims**
- **Unrelated, unfamiliar victims**
- **Deviant sexual interests, preferences**
- **Unmarried**
- **Antisocial personality/psychopathy**

(Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004)

Key Examples of Dynamic Risk Factors

- **Intimacy deficits/conflicts**
- **Hostility**
- **Emotional identification with children**
- **Sexual preoccupation**
- **Lifestyle instability, self-regulation difficulties**
- **Crime-tolerant attitudes**
- **Supervision and treatment non-compliance**

(Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004)